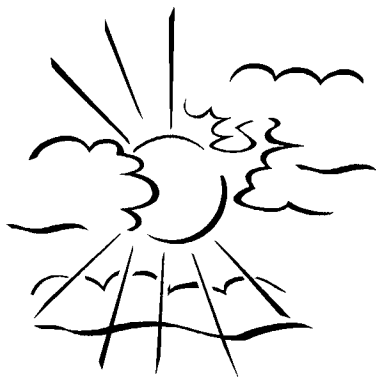


***Department  
of  
Human  
Services***

Prepared by the  
DHS Office of  
Communications  
(517) 373-7394



\*Important story at this spot

# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Wednesday, November 16, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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# Insurance ideas floated

Tuesday, November 15, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Area health-care leaders discussed ways to add 1 million uninsured state residents to coverage plans as part of the Michigan Department of Community Health's effort to provide benefits for everyone. The officials who gathered Monday at Grand Valley State University's Eberhard Center devised no solutions, but their input will be part of a plan expected to be sent to Gov. Jennifer Granholm in the spring. Among the problems are unemployment, employees at small businesses that don't provide health plans and others unaware of programs.

# Illinois Law Offers Coverage for Uninsured Children

By MONICA DAVEY

The New York Times

Published: November 16, 2005

CHICAGO, Nov. 15 - Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich signed a measure on Tuesday intended to allow all children in Illinois, including those in working-class and middle-class families, to obtain health insurance.

National experts on health care said the new law, which will offer discounts on premiums for those who qualify, was the broadest plan to insure children by any state.

Political leaders in other states, the experts said, are certain to be watching whether Illinois succeeds in expanding coverage to its 250,000 children who are now uninsured, about half of whom are not from the poorest families but from families earning more than \$40,000 a year.

Mr. Blagojevich, a Democrat, said he hoped that the move would lead the way for a nation that needs to face a growing problem of middle-income families who cannot afford insurance premiums.

"It's about time that the middle class get some help and the working class get some help," he said in an interview. "Our kids come first, and what's the most important thing for kids? That they're safe and healthy."

Within hours of the signing on the Southwest Side of Chicago, residents submitted contact information to enroll online, though the benefits do not begin until July. By the end of the day, hundreds of people had written in, Mr. Blagojevich's office said.

Although few people here wanted to be viewed as opposing children's having insurance, a concept that one skeptical legislator compared to siding against motherhood or apple pie, Mr. Blagojevich has his doubters.

Critics of the program, which the governor says will cost \$45 million in its first year, said they feared that such a sweeping offer could end up costing far more at a time when the state's budget is strained and that it might turn Illinois into a refuge for families from other states desperate to insure their children.

The critics also complained that the push for this bill, which sped through the Democratic-controlled Legislature, was a publicity stunt by Mr. Blagojevich, a first-term governor who might seek re-election next year and whose administration has received unflattering headlines over a federal inquiry into its hiring practices.

"This is the playbook of a guy who literally wants to turn the page and talk about something else," said State Senator Peter J. Roskam, a Republican from Wheaton who opposed the plan, saying it left numerous unanswered questions about eligibility and costs. "I think it's a landmark that's going to turn into a shipwreck."

Mr. Roskam added that the number of words in the governor's press releases on the program had by far eclipsed the number of words in the actual bill. The press release on Tuesday announcing the signing ran nine pages.

Aides to Mr. Blagojevich said the program, known as All Kids, was meticulously detailed and would work. Families who earn too much to be eligible for the existing state and federally financed health programs, including the widely available KidCare, may buy in to the new plan. The state costs, the aides said, will be paid for by shifting the management of 1.7 million Medicaid recipients. Those patients will no longer go to any doctor on a list of eligible doctors, but to a single physician who will work on more problems earlier, saving an estimated \$56 million the first year.

A family's costs for All Kids will depend on the household income. A family of four earning \$41,000 a year will pay \$40 a month for one child or \$80 a month for two or more children. The co-payment for doctors' visits will be \$10 each. A family of four earning \$61,000 to \$79,000 will pay \$70 for one child and \$140 for two or more children. The co-payment will be \$15.

People with higher incomes and without insurance are also eligible, though the premiums increase significantly. To prevent people from dropping their insurance to switch to the state insurance, children will initially be required to be uninsured since Jan. 1, 2006, or in later years one full year without insurance.

Other states have tackled the same issue, but none have settled on a program as sweeping or comprehensive as the Illinois law, according to Diane Rowland, executive vice president of the Kaiser Family Foundation, a health research group.

In California last month, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, vetoed a bill that would have provided access to coverage for all uninsured children in that state, saying that he believed children should be insured but that the bill failed to detail how to pay for the plan.

Massachusetts has a plan similar to Illinois's but less extensive, a comparison shows. Although Massachusetts offers coverage to all children, the coverage is limited for benefits like prescription medicines, eyeglasses, hearing aids, and mental health and substance abuse services. Under the Illinois plan, a spokeswoman for the governor said, those benefits will have no limits. "Other states are going to watch this very closely," said Alan R. Weil, executive director of the National Academy for State Health Policy, a nonpartisan research organization. "There is broad interest in covering kids, and there will be interest in following Illinois if the story there turns out to be good."

As officials elsewhere wait to see how the plan works and whether the state can afford it, some residents here say they have all the answers they need.

In Carol Stream, a suburb west of Chicago, Annette C. Akey said she was deeply relieved at the prospect of the new coverage. As owners of a real estate company who make about \$60,000 a year, Ms. Akey and her husband reluctantly gave up family health insurance coverage as the premiums soared to more than \$500 a month a few years ago, she said.

"It was a matter of paying the high premiums or keeping the business," Ms. Akey said.

Not long ago, though, their daughter, Katana, 6, became sick. Doctors concluded that she had a kidney problem and a heart murmur, Ms. Akey said, and a three-and-a-half day hospital stay left the Akeys \$10,000 in debt and seeking a second mortgage on their house.

Governor Blagojevich, who has not announced whether he will run for re-election, dismissed critics of his plan. Although attention around the governor has in recent weeks focused on federal subpoenas for hiring records, he has said his administration has done nothing wrong.

He said he had been working on the children's insurance program for years.

"If they want to accuse me of doing it because I want to run for re-election, they're free to do it," he said in the interview. "I'm going to let my actions speak for themselves."

Health

## Seniors jam Day 1 of drug plan sign-up

November 16, 2005

BY EMILIA ASKARI  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Dolores Livingston wore her brown leather cowboy boots to Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak on Tuesday. The 78-year-old retired hardware store accountant was hoping to figure out her new Medicare prescription insurance options then kick on over to her line dancing class. She didn't make it.

Like thousands of seniors across the country, Livingston wound up spending hours Tuesday considering her choices and fighting with computer delays caused by the high volume of people trying to log on to Medicare's Web site.

Tuesday was the first day seniors could sign up for Medicare's new prescription drug coverage. The enrollment period ends in May, with coverage for early enrollers beginning in January. Across metro Detroit, experts and volunteers were ready Tuesday at libraries, senior centers, pharmacies and at least one hospital to help the area's nearly 500,000 Medicare recipients decipher the choices.

Medicare is a government insurance program that covers people who have disabilities or are age 65 or older. This is the first time that prescription drugs will be included in the plan.

Some seniors have to choose from 78 plans from 18 companies that offer a wide range of monthly premiums, co-pays, deductibles and benefits. Not every plan pays for every drug.

Two of the largest participating insurance companies in the Detroit area, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the Health Alliance Plan, were bombarded with questions Tuesday.

Blue Cross and its HMO, Blue Care Network, fielded 3,600 calls and conducted five informational clinics around the state.

Susan Schwandt, a HAP spokesperson, said the phone lines were so busy there that managers didn't have time to tally the call volume.

"Our lines are being flooded," she said.

At Beaumont, the lobby of the South Tower was crowded by 11 a.m. with seniors who had registered for the chance to sit down at a laptop with a volunteer who could walk them through Medicare's Web site, inputting information about which drugs they use and retrieving information about various insurance plans.

Interest in this kind of help is so high that Tuesday's session was booked full a month ago.

Some people, such as Marguerite Nicholson, 80, of Farmington Hills, didn't get the message that they were supposed to register in advance.

"Maddening," she huffed when told she would have to wait up to two hours to get some help.

Maybe. "The whole thing is frustrating."

The sessions, scheduled to be 30 minutes, ended up stretching to one hour and 15 minutes because of computer delays.

Organizers scrambled to call people with later appointments, telling them they would be rescheduled for another day.

Maurice Tyler, 69, of Bloomfield Hills was losing his temper. "I'm going to need a couple of pills before the day is over," he said, rather loudly. "I'm going to need some Valiums."

At a table nearby, Ellen Harris of Pontiac was hoping to enroll in prescription drug coverage right then and there.

The former electrical factory worker, 49, has bladder and kidney problems that have left her disabled. She takes 15 drugs that cost about \$500 a month.

"I have a lot of medical expenses," she said. "I want drug coverage today."

But the computer she was trying to use was down, so she just waited.

By a wall of windows nearby, Livingston of Wixom shuffled her cowboy boots on the plush carpeting and put on a smile.

She had a stroke two years ago. Now, she takes three drugs, which cost her about \$571 every three months. After waiting for more than an hour, she learned that she could reduce her payments by about half.

She took a printout of her best options to show her daughter and her pharmacist.

"It was worth waiting for," she said. "Very enlightening."

*Contact **EMILIA ASKARI** at [askari@freepress.com](mailto:askari@freepress.com) or 248-351-3298. Free Press personal finance columnist **SUSAN TOMPOR** contributed to this report.*

## Free counseling and seminars

- There are one-on-one assistance programs and seminars scheduled to help people walk through their options with the various drug programs.  
Several events are being sponsored by the Area Agency on Aging 1B's Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program. Call 800-803-7174 for additional information.  
Some dates and locations for free sessions include:  
Oakland County
- **Dec. 1 and 15**  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Botsford General Hospital  
28050 Grand River Ave.  
Farmington Hills  
First-come, first-serve. Free parking, follow signs.  
Macomb County  
Call the Macomb County Department of Senior Citizen Services at 586-466-4545 or 586-466-8725 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays to make an appointment for Macomb Assistance Days.
- **Dec. 13**  
Macomb Intermediate School District  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
44001 Garfield Road  
Clinton Township  
Wayne County
- **Nov. 28**  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
St. John Riverview Hospital  
7733 E. Jefferson  
Detroit  
Call 313-499-4845 to schedule an appointment.
- **Nov. 30**  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
DMC -- Detroit Receiving Hospital  
4201 St. Antoine Blvd.  
Detroit  
Call 888-264-0102 to schedule an appointment.
- What's happening:  
About 40 million Medicare recipients can sign up for the new drug prescription coverage plans.  
Dates you need to know:
  - Jan. 1: First day to use the Medicare drug coverage if you've signed up.
  - May 15: Last day to join a plan without paying a penalty, unless you qualify for exception.



Where to get help:

- Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program: 800-803-7174. Online: [www.mymmap.org](http://www.mymmap.org).
- Compare plans at 800-633-4227 or at [www.medicare.gov.cq-bernas](http://www.medicare.gov.cq-bernas)
- People with limited incomes can get information at 800-772-1213 or at [www.ssa.gov.cq-bernas](http://www.ssa.gov.cq-bernas)
- Veterans can get help at 800-827-1000 or at [www.va.gov.cq-bernas](http://www.va.gov.cq-bernas)

## Health

# **SUSAN TOMPOR: Picking the right drug plan requires research**

## **But options confuse some senior citizens**

November 16, 2005

BY SUSAN TOMPOR  
FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

As a retired pharmacist, Alan Dopke wanted a Medicare prescription-drug plan that offered broad coverage and didn't cost a fortune.

He also wanted an insurer he knew and trusted.

That's why the 65-year-old Oak Park retiree spent a lot of time researching the plans from two local companies that, based on his years behind the counter at CVS, treated their customers well.

He looked at the **Health Alliance Plan**, or HAP, and **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan**.

It didn't take long for him to settle on the HAP Senior Plus plan, which includes medical coverage and Medicare prescription-drug coverage.

Alan and his wife, Daisy, had been insured through HAP before. They liked the doctors in the HMO plan and the service. They also liked the price -- a \$50 monthly premium for medical and prescription-drug coverage -- and the fact that Senior Plus didn't charge a \$250 up-front deductible for the first round of prescription drugs.

"Once I saw what HAP had for the price, I felt it was more than adequate for what I needed," Dopke said.

Under Medicare's new prescription-drug plan, consumers must pick one approved plan. They can't sign up for a string of plans. And they probably wouldn't want to do that -- given the premiums for drug coverage alone can start at \$15 a month.

When Michigan consumers look at the options from HAP they must realize it doesn't offer stand-alone drug coverage. HAP's four offerings in 2005 -- and nine options in 2006 -- provide medical-only coverage or medical plus a Medicare-prescription drug plan, says Charles Timms, director of sales and marketing for HAP.

The Senior Plus plan -- an HMO -- rolls the Medicare Part A, Part B and Part D into one. The options are available for Medicare recipients who live in one of nine counties in Michigan: Genesee, Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne. The Dopkes' plan covers Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. HAP also has PPO options, with preferred medical providers, with Medicare drug coverage that costs \$113 a month or \$132 a month for enhanced coverage.

The Dopkes -- both in their second marriage -- have five children between them. They do not have a pension. They're living on Social Security plus investments, including retirement accounts. They expect to live on about \$60,000 a year.

They enjoy traveling to Las Vegas, the Caribbean and elsewhere.

Dopke, who retired in March 2004, takes four prescriptions: Hyzar, which treats high blood pressure; Catapres, an anti-hypertension drug; Monopril, a high-blood pressure medication and Fosamax, an osteoporosis drug.

His wife Daisy, 77, regularly takes six prescription drugs: Coumadin, a blood thinner; Tenoretic, a blood-pressure medication; a prescription dosage of folic acid; Lipitor to treat high cholesterol; and Synthroid, a drug for a thyroid condition. She's also started taking Flonase, which treats nasal allergy symptoms.

Before Part D, Dopke estimated his wife's medications would cost about \$3,000 a year. But after some initial paperwork, he's thinking that the Medicare prescription-drug coverage in the Senior Plus plan could lower the out-of-pocket drug costs to about \$1,380 a year.

The co-pays on prescriptions are \$10 on generic drugs or what's known as Tier 1, \$30 for preferred drugs or Tier 2 and \$55 for specialty drugs or Tier 3.

Dopke, who just qualified for Medicare in April, said he had reason to study the plans earlier than some because he needed extra medical insurance coverage, too.

He understands why many people still haven't picked a Medicare prescription-drug plan -- and might not do so until the deadline of May 15, 2006. He also understands why many remain confused about the process.

His sister-in-law who is a widow in Nevada has prescription-drug coverage through her deceased husband's UAW-negotiated retiree benefits. He notes that she's even confused about the onslaught of information -- and she doesn't even need to make any changes or pick a Part D plan. "The federal government has not completely explained the program," he said.

Contact **SUSAN TOMPOR** at 313-222-8876 or [tomp@freep](mailto:tomp@freep)

### Third in a 5-part Medicare drug plan series

- How are seniors choosing which Medicare prescription drug plan is best for them? Or whether to sign up at all?

Here's what they're telling the Free Press -- and you -- in a weeklong series that continues today.

**Monday:** Marcia and Lester Weiner of Royal Oak are searching for a plan that's just right for them. She has no prescription drug coverage. He makes a small co-payment as part of his benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Tuesday:** Barbara and Ted Coden of West Bloomfield were nervous until they received a letter from Ted's former employer confirming that the company offers better drug coverage than they could get through Medicare. That made their decision easy: Do nothing.

**Today:** Alan and Daisy Dopke of Oak Park decided to go with an insurer they know and trust. They picked a Medicare Advantage plan that provides medical coverage and drug benefits.

**Thursday:** Frances and Richard Mackie of Oak Park are frustrated about letters they got from their employers. It's made their decision harder -- not easier.

**Friday:** John Lear of Livonia is tackling the decision just like a former accountant. He's digging through the numbers as best as he can.

Log on to [www.freep.com](http://www.freep.com) to read the first two days of this report.

For more information

- Resources for picking a Medicare Part D plan:
- For enrollment information, Medicare-eligible individuals can call Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the Blue Care Network at 800-485-4415.
- Potential new enrollees for HAP Medicare Advantage Plans can call 888-497-7550.
- United HealthCare Insurance, which offers the AARP MedicareRx Plan, can be reached at 888-867-5564. Or go to [www.aarpmedicarerx.com](http://www.aarpmedicarerx.com).
- Humana Inc., which also offers a Medicare-prescription drug plan, can be reached at 800-281-6918.
- When shopping for a plan, keep in mind convenience, cost and coverage.
- For a broader list of insurers with plans, call Medicare for help at 800-633-4227. Have your Medicare card in hand. Or visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

Some low-income people get special break

- Special rules and breaks apply to low-income households.  
Some low-income retirees need to get help and sign up for a Medicare prescription drug plan, known as Part D.  
But other low-income households won't have to take any action and still get prescription drug coverage under Medicare Part D.  
If your income is limited, you might qualify for Extra Help. Limited income is now defined as \$14,355 for a single person or \$19,245 for a married couple living together in 2005.  
You will not qualify for Extra Help if you have a large amount of savings or certain other assets, such as stocks or life insurance policies. If you're single, your financial resources would need to be less than \$11,500. If you're married, your financial resources must be less than \$23,000. Owning a home, a car or personal possessions, like furniture and jewelry, would not count against you as an asset and would not be included in your financial resources.  
This special Extra Help program provides low co-payments, low or no deductible and low or no premiums. To take part in this special program, a senior who has a low income would need to contact the Social Security Administration at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or call 800-772-1213. Or you might apply in person at a local Social Security office.  
But if retirees are receiving Medicare and Medicaid, they'd automatically be put into a Medicare prescription drug plan, said Mary Johnson, director of the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program, which offers free assistance to seniors. The phone number is 800-803-7174.

Alan and Daisy Dopke

- **Ages:** Alan, 65; Daisy, 77.  
**Hometown:** Oak Park  
**Living on:** They have no pension. They have Social Security benefits and retirement savings. They expect to spend about \$60,000 a year in retirement.  
**Drugs:** He has four prescriptions: Hyzar, which treats high blood pressure; Catapres, an anti-hypertension medication; Monopril, a high blood pressure medication, and Fosamax, an osteoporosis medication.

His wife, Daisy, regularly takes six prescription drugs: Coumadin, a blood thinner; Tenoretic, a blood pressure medication; a prescription dosage of folic acid; Lipitor to treat high cholesterol and Synthroid, a medication for a thyroid condition. She also takes Flonase for nasal allergy symptoms. Before Part D, Dopke said his wife's medications alone would cost them about \$3,000 a year. He's estimating that his Part D coverage now can cut the costs by more than half.

**Alan's advice to other seniors:** Try to look past all that Part D marketing hype. Just because you get a brochure doesn't mean it's a good plan for you. Look for a plan that should work for your drug needs. Think about local plans. Read the formularies or the listings of drugs that a particular Part D plan covers. Make sure your drugs are on the list.

Published November 16, 2005

## **Medicare: Problem for Medicaid patients is another strike on drug plan**

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Even prior to its official start, the fundamental flaws in the new Medicare prescription drug program were apparent.

Too complex. Too tilted toward the interests of drug firms. Far too expensive.

Now America starts living with the consequences of this mistake. Citizens will soon read and hear of plenty of stories about gaps or retreats in coverage.

Advertisement

Here's just one that should motivate Congress to go back and fix this program.

The original political driving force, you see, was the need to alleviate the big cost increases for low-income seniors. But as Congress and President Bush lurched toward passage in late 2003, the idea was transformed. Instead of a targeted, affordable program for the needy, Medicare would offer drug coverage for everyone - whether they needed it or not.

Much has been written here about how this decision adds hundreds of billions to the nation's fiscal crisis. Much also has been written on how the specifics of the benefit plans make the new program of little utility to many seniors.

Now, however, we are also seeing that the new program also may harm those we sought most to aid - the poor.

On Monday, reports the New York Times, a coalition of advocacy groups in eight states filed a lawsuit to ensure the Medicare program doesn't leave some seniors behind.

These seniors have been getting drug coverage from Medicaid, the state-federal program for the poor. But the 2003 revamp puts them under the Medicare program - and into the same dizzying array of choices and bureaucratise faced by the roughly 1.5 million Michigan residents in Medicare.

Yet, as the suing groups point out, these former Medicaid recipients are marked by lower levels of education or higher incidence of impairment, such as Alzheimer's. They are particularly challenged by the complexity of the new program.

There are simply too many things wrong with the Medicare program. The nation can't afford it. The rules don't do enough to contain drug prices. And countless seniors will gain little to nothing from the program.

November 16, 2005

## Medicare drug rollout leaves seniors frazzled

### Overloaded Web site adds to frustration for many

By Sharon Terlep / The Detroit News

**ROYAL OAK** -- Clutching pill bottles and paperwork, a swarm of seniors streamed into Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak on Tuesday for what turned out to be a glitch-riddled rollout of Medicare's prescription drug coverage.

The Beaumont sign-up was the first of at least 18 events to be held throughout Metro Detroit to help people enroll in the long-awaited plan that for the first time will help elderly and disabled Medicare recipients pay for prescription medicines.

But within hours of opening, the federal Web site offering online enrollment became overloaded with users, compounding the already widespread confusion over which of dozens of plans to choose. Nearly 200 seniors at Beaumont faced long waits and canceled appointments as the computer problems stymied months of planning and an army of volunteers.

The deadline to enroll is still six months away, but many people -- stressed over the plethora of options and threat of penalties -- rushed to their phones and computers on the first day.

"I was so anxious about it I didn't sleep well last night," said Detroit's Mae Wyatt, who currently has no prescription drug coverage. "I didn't want to wait."

Wyatt, 70, was able to pick a plan in about 10 minutes with the help of a trained staffer using the government Web site.

The Medicare plan will cut her prescription drug costs from about \$550 a month to less than \$200. She was one of the lucky few who got through the system before it started backing up.

Donald Wojciechowski, 72, of Orion was less fortunate. He showed up at 10:30 a.m. for an 11 a.m. appointment. At noon, he was still waiting.

"It's very frustrating," he said, sitting amid folding tables and laptop computers. "I could go at anytime or I could just have to sit here."

The stakes are high for the more than 40 million U.S. seniors and disabled adults eligible for the prescription drug benefit.

In most states, they will have more than 40 plans to choose from that offer an array of benefits. Michigan's seniors can pick from 65 Medicare health plans, at least 38 of which will include the

#### Important dates

- Dec. 31: Last day to change prescription drug plans.
- Jan. 1: Drug coverage starts.
- May 15: Last day to sign up for drug plans without penalty.

Where to get info

#### Help online:

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services:  
[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)
- Michigan Office of Services to the Aging:  
[www.miseniors.net/MiSeniors+Home/](http://www.miseniors.net/MiSeniors+Home/)
- Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program:  
[www.mymmap.org](http://www.mymmap.org)
- Medicare Rights Center:  
[www.medicarerights.org/](http://www.medicarerights.org/) On the home page, check out "Medicare Drug Coverage 101: Everything You Need to Know About the New Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit"
- Kaiser Family Foundation:  
[www.kff.org/](http://www.kff.org/)

#### Important numbers:

- Federal Medicare helpline: (800) 633-4227
- Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program: (800) 803-7174
- Social Security Administration: (800) 772-1213
- Department of Veterans Affairs: (800) 827-1000
- Area Agency on Aging 1-B (covers Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair and Washtenaw counties): (800) 852-7795
- The Senior Alliance, Area Agency on Aging 1-C (covers western and southern Wayne County): (800) 815-1112
- Detroit Area Agency on Aging: (313) 446-4444

#### Getting assistance:

Southeast Michigan's area agencies on aging will hold at least 18 events to help people sign up for plans. Appointments are required. The next events:

- Nov. 18, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Where: Windemere Park Senior Center, 31800 Van Dyke Avenue in Warren (586) 466-4545 or (586) 466-8725



prescription coverage. Premiums will range from \$22 per month to \$133.

Coverage becomes effective Jan. 1 for those who sign up before then. Those who miss the final May 15 deadline will pay a penalty equal to 1 percent of their monthly premium for each month they're late.

More than 2,000 people throughout southeast Michigan have signed up through local area agencies on aging to attend events like the one at Beaumont. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan has received more than 30,000 requests from customers for packets of information.

"The phones are ringing off the hook," Blues spokeswoman Helen Stojic said.

The problems were not limited to Metro Detroit. A national nonprofit group designed to advocate for Medicare users became overwhelmed early Tuesday.

"We have staff in tears because they can't respond to people who really need help," said Robert M. Hayes, president of the Medicare Rights Center based in New York.

Amid the confusion, experts are cautioning against haste. Those who sign up now have until Dec. 31 to change their plan.

The situation should improve after the initial rush, said Louanne Bakk of the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, a nonprofit that serves Metro Detroit.

Bakk organized Tuesday's event and felt it went well overall. Despite the backups, many seniors were able to get help, she said, and cancelled appointments will be rescheduled.

*You can reach Sharon Terlep at (313)223-4686 or [sterlep@detnews.com](mailto:sterlep@detnews.com).*

# Medicare drug plan offers strong dose of confusion

11/16



**BECCA ROTHCHILD**

**W**hen it comes to the Medicare prescription program, I'm probably as close as the average citizen can get to being an expert. I've been reporting on it for two

**I entered my parents' information on the Web site and was taken to a list of 40 plans.**

years, had two detailed briefings, spent countless hours questioning those who run it, whiled away more than a few hours exploring the medicare.gov Web site and written a fair share of editorials about this new venture. My interest is professional and personal. Two people I love dearly are counting on me to sort out this program for them.

Yet I am flummoxed.

So what chance does the average senior citizen stand?

A lot of them have given up. The Kaiser Family Foundation, one of the premier in-

stitutes of health policy research, last week released a survey indicating 37% of seniors don't plan to enroll and 43% remain undecided. Only 1 in 5 seniors eligible for the program are sure they will participate. Most seniors — 61%, according to Kaiser — say they don't understand the program well, if at all.

The government started "helping" by mailing seniors a 98-page booklet. Seriously. Ninety-eight pages. Talk about daunting.

Now the feds are urging seniors to get help from myriad local agencies.

I tried that. Last month I e-mailed three and called one, trying to enlist a specialist to back me up in case I miss anything. It's only my parents' health that's at stake.

Well, one never answered. The two that e-mailed back basically sent me the list of sites where I'd found their names and referred me to the medicare.gov Web site, which they cautioned was far from fully functional.

When I reached a live person by phone, she said "call back in two weeks" in a flustered voice that inspired no confidence that the one adviser would ever have time for my parents.

So I asked spokespeople for the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which is running this show, how the heck people are supposed to manage it. I was told the

ed to make it?

How about just simple enough for 42 million elderly and disabled people to figure out?

On the eve of enrollment day, I spent more than two hours online. I input my parents' drugs on one screen, then their dosages on another, then the pharmacy they wanted to use. I was taken to a list of 40 potential plans. But there was a discrepancy between my mother's results, on which asterisks indicated some drugs weren't on the "formulary," or approved drug list, and my father's, which had none.

Perplexed, I called the 1-800-Medicare helpline. Surprisingly, the hold time was brief after battering my way through too many voice mail menus. An agent gathered information about my parents before asking how she could help. I asked if my dad was lucky and all his drugs were covered, or if asterisks didn't always appear when you compare different plans.

goal was to have the Web site working completely by Tuesday, the first day for sign-up, and really, with something this multilayered, how much simpler could they be expect-

The agent was confused. She said no plan would come up that didn't cover all their drugs. When I assured her several had, she dropped a bombshell: The Web site might not be accurate yet. I

was stunned. The night before people were to sign up?

I have since been assured by CMS that the agent was incorrect. So either I have no faith in that answer, or no faith that people who call the 800 number will receive accurate information, because I don't believe these things only happen to me.

The sad thing about this mess — besides the \$720 billion price tag over 10 years — is no one can afford to throw up their hands and walk away.

With all the headaches, Medicare drug coverage will probably be cheaper than what most people — save auto industry retirees — are used to. People should join now, to reap the full benefit come Jan. 1, to avoid expensive penalties if they don't sign by May 15, and because even if they're fairly healthy now, it's good insurance if that changes.

But turning your health over to a government-sponsored program requires a level of trust, and so far the Medicare bureaucracy seems to have done more to squander it than earn it.

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BECCA ROTHSCHILD is deputy editorial page editor. Contact her at [rothschild@freepress.com](mailto:rothschild@freepress.com), 313-222-6659, or in care of the editorial page.

# Seniors check out drug plans

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

se@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8554

Betty Buchanan, 66, learned she needed to quickly call to ensure she hadn't permanently dumped her Pfizer-backed prescription-drug plan for the Medicare-approved prescription-drug provider she had been considering.

Freddie Jackson, 67, learned he might be able to save most of the \$250-plus he'd been spending on three medications and get the same amounts for \$1 to \$3 apiece.

"All you've got to pay for any medication you get is one \$3 co-pay -- that's all," Michael Myles, an adviser for the Access Benefits Coalition, told Jackson.

Myles was at Second Baptist Church, 609 N. Rose St., on Tuesday, the first day that Medicare recipients could enroll in one of the new prescription-drug plans, funded in part by the federal government to help rein in escalating health-care costs.

Bertha Stewart, a nurse who is a niche coordinator at Bronson Methodist Hospital, is planning to offer more Medicare prescription-drug-enrollment sessions like the one held Tuesday afternoon at Second Baptist Church, where she is a member.

Medicare recipients can enroll in the plans through May 15 without penalty, but after that date can incur a 1 percent monthly increase for every month they do not sign up. Those Medicare recipients wanting to have the prescription-drug coverage on Jan. 1 need to sign up for a plan by Dec. 31.

About a dozen people, all Kalamazoo residents, visited the church during the two-hour span. Myles answered seniors' questions as he had them fill out pre-enrollment forms and reviewed materials they brought with them, such as Jackson's Oct. 16 letter indicating he was eligible for Medicaid.

Helping Jackson through the pre-enrollment form was his sister, 58-year-old Everleana Jenkins, who was also helping her husband, Sidney Jenkins, 69, and another brother, Joe Jackson, 65, enroll in the prescription-drug plans.

"I'm here because we wanted to find the best plan to put my husband (in), because we've been paying cash for my husband's medicines," Jenkins said. They spend about \$250 a month for her husband's six prescription medications for high-blood pressure and diabetes, she said.

"The significance was ... people need to go to where the people are," Stewart said about those who can guide people through the enrollment process. "People tend to come to a church, and they feel comfortable."

She's now planning to organize similar sessions at least once a month at the church through May 15.

Second Baptist Church wasn't the only place where questions were fielded Tuesday about enrollment in the plans.

Colleen Simpson, coordinator of the Older Adult Resource Services Program of South County Community Services, said her agency was busy the first day of sign-up.

"Our workload is high," Simpson said. "We're taking close to 100 calls a day. We're taking reservations for our informational sessions." She stressed that people need to call to make a reservation before attending any of the sessions her agency is sponsoring -- to make sure they have enough seats.

# **Local Medicare enrollment session canceled**

Port Huron Times Herald

November 16, 2005

A Medicare enrollment event scheduled for Saturday at the Academic Transitional Academy in Port Huron Township has been canceled. More than 300 seniors who registered for the event will not be able to register until later.

The national Internet site tool created to guide seniors through picking the correct Medicare plan for them is not functioning properly, said Laura Newsome, executive director of the St. Clair County Council on Aging. She said the news reached the council this morning.

"I don't want (seniors) to become upset or panic-stricken over this, because it's a delay, is all. The service will be available to them once the federal government has cleaned up the tool," Newsome said. "As soon as it is functional, we will immediately be enrolling people."

The event was to be sponsored by the council, the Area Agency on Aging 1B and the St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency, which was providing space at the academy.

Newsome said the next event is scheduled for Jan. 7, 2006.

For details, call your local senior center or the downtown office of the council, (810) 987-8811.

Published November 16, 2005

## **Kids' photos spark interest in adoption**

Lansing State Journal

A woman in her 60s wondered if she could still adopt.

A state government worker wanted to send the kids special holiday gifts. A woman whose spouse is deployed to Iraq said she has too much time on her hands and wondered if she could lend a hand.

The Michigan Heart Gallery, a traveling photographic exhibit of Michigan children who are waiting to be adopted, is provoking plenty of reaction, which is what the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange hoped it would do.

The gallery was unveiled Tuesday at the state Capitol to increase awareness about adoption and to recruit families for the 400 children waiting to be adopted through the foster-care system. Most are black, over the age of 8, or need to be adopted along with siblings.

The exhibit will be in the Dempsey Room, Grand Towers Building today through Friday; at the Library of Michigan and Historical Center on Saturday through Dec. 2; and at Impression 5 Science Center from Dec. 3 through Jan. 9.

- Nicole Geary  
How to help

- In-kind donations such as catering and transportation
- Corporate sponsors
- Volunteer photographers willing to shoot portraits
- Adoptive families willing to share their experience
- Call the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, (800) 589-6273, or visit [www.miheart.org](http://www.miheart.org) for more information

*MIRS*

*November 14, 2005*

## **Art For Adoption Hangs At Capitol**

Families, kids and adoption organizations gathered in the Capitol to celebrate the state's first Heart Gallery.

The Heart Gallery is a display of photographs of Michigan children that are looking for adoptive families. The gallery started in New Mexico in 2001.

This year, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE), the Adoptive Family Support Network (AFSN) and the Department of Human Services (DHS), asked photographers to take artistic pictures of 62 kids in the state's foster system and display them in the Capitol.

Many of the kids featured were teenagers, kids with special needs and siblings, which are three groups of kids that are considered difficult to adopt.

"Many kids are adopted by excellent families and foster families but for some of these kids, finding a permanent family is much more difficult," said Kenyon **KOPP**, of MARE.

Michigan has an average of 4,000 kids circulating through foster care. The number is not stagnant because kids constantly move in and out of the system. Some kids get adopted but those who don't are out of the system at age 18.

Adoption agencies are trying to get the older kids to find permanent homes before they turn 18.

"I think I would say you get as much from adopting a child as they get from you," said DHS Director Marianne **UDOW**.

Udow and several adoptive parents and children looking for permanent homes spoke at the gathering about the struggles and successes of adopting children.

The exhibit will travel around the state for a year with the hopes of creating adoption awareness.

# Waiting to be part of a family

November 16, 2005

BY JACK KRESNAK  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The waiting, 12-year-old Arius said, is the hardest part.

Arius, exceptionally bright and pressing ahead with plans to be a medical doctor, has waited four years.

"It's hard," Arius said in an interview at the state Capitol on Tuesday. "I pray every night before I go to bed."

Arius, just like hundreds of other children in Michigan's foster care system, prays that time won't run out and that someday someone will make him a permanent part of their family. A new effort to find loving and nurturing homes for Arius and about 300 other older foster children was launched Tuesday with the help of 46 photojournalists, including two from the Detroit Free Press.

"Amazingly, there are parents out there who love parenting older children," said Jean Hoffman, a retired state adoptions manager who now volunteers for the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE).

MARE, with the help of private donations and the volunteer services of the photojournalists, is sponsoring the Michigan Heart Gallery, a collection of vibrant portraits of 62 children who are available for adoption. The idea is to showcase adoptable children in artistic and compelling photographs officials hope will touch the hearts of people who could give them decent homes. The exhibit was previewed at the state capitol Tuesday, will officially open Saturday at the Michigan Library and Historical Center in Lansing, and will run through Dec. 1. After that, the photographic exhibit travels to Grand Rapids, Detroit, Flint, Saginaw and other cities yet to be scheduled.

Some 4,000 children in Michigan's foster care system are available for adoption after Family Court judges terminated parental rights because of abuse, neglect or abandonment. The majority of those children have relatives, foster parents or others who are willing to adopt them. But about 300 need extra help finding permanent homes through MARE.

Kenyon Kopp, MARE's tracking coordinator who previously was a photojournalist in Wisconsin and Missouri, sent an e-mail last spring to journalists who belong to the Michigan Press Photographers Association, inviting them to participate.

Volunteers, including Free Press photographers Richard Lee and Kathleen Galligan, joined the effort and their work is in the exhibit.

"We've got some terrific photographers in Michigan who have taken these pictures of children knowing that the only thing they're going to get out of it is a photo credit and the knowledge that they're doing something good," Kopp said.

But the real stars of the exhibit are the kids. About two dozen attended the preview. Arius, who lives at Christ Child House, a residential facility in Detroit for boys who are difficult to place in foster homes, said he shares a room with two other boys. He's seen several of his friends chosen for adoption.



"Sometimes I really don't want to say good-bye to them, but I do," Arius said. "They were with me for a couple of months or a couple of years and then they leave."

When they leave, the eighth-grader who gets A's and B's and likes science and math best, says he feels "sad and angry."

But Arius, who will turn 13 soon, is hopeful. He has met someone who might want to adopt him through MARE.

"Maybe I might get adopted by a lady named Susan."

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or [kresnak@freepress](mailto:kresnak@freepress)

For more information

- **To visit foster kids**

Photographs of the kids soon will be posted at [www.miheart.org](http://www.miheart.org), which now has information about the Heart Gallery as well as links to other Web sites featuring adoptable kids. There is also a gallery of nearly 300 adoptable children, including videos at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org).

**To adopt**

Visit [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org) for more information on how to adopt the children.

**If you go**

The traveling exhibit is scheduled:

Dec. 3 to Jan. 9 at the Impression Five Science Museum in Lansing

Jan. 10 through Feb. 10 at the Celebration Cinema in Grand Rapids

Feb. 11 through March 11, at the main branch of the Detroit Public Library

March 12 through April 5 at the Flint Public Library

# Support overseas adoptions

International adoptions are a fairly recent part of American culture, and adoptive families and society alike are still learning about the needs and demands of internationally adopted children. Parents working their way through an international adoption face a number of challenges.

At the start, there is the cost, the paperwork and the travel. These challenges are followed in turn by complications that occur in a child's home country.

And once back at home, the new parent has to deal with a variety of questions ranging from the child's likes and dislikes, to school, to more difficult areas like attachment issues and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

November marks National Adoption Awareness Month. At a time when approximately one in three American families has a personal connection to adoption, a month marking the role of adoption in American life is becoming all the more relevant.

## JOHN PERRY

of DeWitt serves on the board of Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoption.

The adoptive parent faces needs in three areas: education about adoption and the needs of adoptive children; support from other adoptive families; and, finally, advocacy, to help lobby the education system and community networks on how to best serve this growing population.

Adoptive parenting is parenting with a twist. An effective road map for adoptive moms and dads is still being charted. But experienced adoptive parents, who know about the resources available for adoptive families, can advocate to help a child get the intervention he or she requires — whether it is with special education in the schools, information about development issues or difficulties with language or attachment.

The experience of adoptive families, both in the countries where they adopted their children and back in the United States as they work to raise their new kids, provides that needed road map for others making the journey.

The path these parents and children follow requires that a solid infrastructure of education, support and advocacy be in place — because the end of their journey is no place less than a family.

# Prosecutor heaps abuse-case blame on adoptive parents

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

By John Agar  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The state and adoption agencies share some blame for placing 13 children in an unsafe home, a prosecutor said today.

But most of the blame lies with the parents, former adoptive parents of the year Beryl and Jerome Richards, said Kent County Assistant Prosecutor Vicki Seidl said in the opening day of their trial. The proceeding will determine whether the children should be permanently removed from the home of the Kentwood couple.

Before the Richardses adopted the children, some of them were removed from unsafe homes, Seidl said.

"The real tragedy is they were put in a place where they were not safe again," Seidl said.

Prosecutors said some of the children will testify about beatings inflicted by the Richardses, and some will testify they were sexually assaulted in the home by siblings, and their parents did nothing to stop it. Prosecutors say the children were disciplined with belts, extension cords and shoes.

Defense attorney Kevin Cronin denied the abuse, calling the couple good parents who provided a safe home.

Why did agencies allow the couple to adopt 13 kids "if they didn't think their home was safe?" he asked.

The defense says the parents were unaware children were sexually abused and suggested their religious beliefs justified corporal punishment.

While the prosecutor explained to jurors physical evidence of abuse may be lacking, the defense said it doesn't exist because it didn't happen.

Four lawyers -- representing the state, the parents and the children -- spent two days questioning potential jurors before choosing six men and two women Tuesday. All but one have children.

Of the eight jurors, six will decide the case. Five of six jurors are needed to give Kent County Family Court Judge Nanaruth Carpenter jurisdiction of the children. She could determine whether the couple should lose parental rights.

The trial is set for eight days, with more than 100 witnesses listed.

In 2002, the couple were named adoptive parents of the year by Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association.

# Governor makes false child abduction report illegal

11/14/2005, 8:46 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Starting in February, it will be a felony to falsely report a child abduction under legislation signed Monday by Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

The bills are aimed at preventing a false Amber Alert, which waste law enforcement and media resources, according to state lawmakers.

Making a false report of a child abduction will be a felony punishable by up to four years in prison and a \$2,000 fine.

Just last week, a 32-year-old Muskegon Township women was charged with a misdemeanor after her report of a missing baby and teenage mother — which resulted in an Amber Alert — was shown to be false, authorities said.

Under the Amber system, short for America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response, radio and TV stations broadcast information about reported child abductions. The information also is posted on electronic highway signs in the Detroit and Grand Rapids areas.

# Driver will face exam in death of 4-year-old

Jackson Citizen Patriot

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

Mario Morgan, the driver of the vehicle in which 4-year-old Da'Shaun Ingram died during a car crash, will have a preliminary examination Nov. 28.

Morgan, 24, was charged with driving with a suspended license causing death at his arraignment Monday.

If convicted, Morgan could receive up to 10 years in prison.

Magistrate Frederick Bishop set a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond for Morgan.

The Nov. 28 hearing is to determine if there is enough evidence to try Morgan in circuit court.

Morgan also had a bench warrant for failing to comply with an earlier sentence on a 2004 conviction of frequenting a drug house, according to District Court records.

For that failure to comply, Morgan was ordered to pay a \$155 fine or serve 10 days in the county jail.

He paid the fine and was released Monday.

On Thursday, Morgan was driving a 1999 Mitsubishi, belonging to his fiancée and Da'Shaun's mother, Shiree Thomas, when he fell asleep at the wheel and crashed into a concrete bridge abutment on Lansing Avenue.

Da'Shaun died instantly in the crash, Blackman Township police said.

# Young offenders might deserve second chance

Web-posted Nov 15, 2005

## OAKLAND PRESS EDITORIAL

Locking 17-year-olds away for life comes under the heading of "it seemed like a good idea at the time."

A generation ago, the Michigan public was alarmed by an epidemic of violent crime, especially in Oakland County. The Legislature responded by passing a bill mandating life sentences without parole, including for 17-year-olds, in murder cases.

That also came on the heels of the discovery that the average "lifer" in our state prisons was out in about 20 years. People wanted "life in prison" to mean what it said.

Now, however, we're beginning to realize that both justice and the public safety were being served in many of those releases. It's especially true when we convict a teenager and end up with a middle-aged person behind bars.

As our story Sunday noted, state Sen. Liz Brater, D-Ann Arbor, has introduced a bill that would give the youngest offenders a second chance, though the literal life sentence would remain on the books and still, presumably, be the norm. Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca agrees that it shouldn't be used in every case.

The growing sentiment for allowing some discretion is not evidence of softhearted and softheaded hand-wringing, but of the age-old notion that two wrongs do not make a right.

There are some cases in which an adolescent impulse need not wholly destroy two lives instead of one. It's also a recognition of the fact that the brains of teens have not necessarily finished growing.

And there are other considerations.

The organization Citizens Alliance for Public Spending found that since 1983 the percentage of state tax dollars going to pay for prisons has increased from 5 percent to 20 percent.

Its members argue that better prison and parole management could reduce that number significantly without increasing the danger to the public. The organization also says young offenders, when released in their 30s and 40s, are the least likely to commit more crimes.

We can be alarmed and overreact in the short term, but in the long term we're generous and sensible. Brater's bill deserves support.

# Troubled teen center eyes growth

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

By Julie Makarewicz  
The Grand Rapids Press

KENTWOOD -- Wedgwood Christian Services hopes to more than double the number of residential beds at its Kentwood campus, according to a long-range plan to be presented next week.

The proposal could take as long as 10 years to complete. The plan shows a possible five future buildings on the 36th Street location. If all the buildings are constructed, the number of residential beds could increase from 58 to 196.

The Kentwood Planning Commission will consider the plans at a public hearing at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in City Hall.

Randy Zylstra, director of services for Wedgwood, admits the plans as presented may be more than will ever be built on the 20-acre campus at the southeast corner of 36th Street and Shaffer Avenue. But he said it is important to have long-range plans in place and approved by the city for potential future growth.

Wedgwood, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the care and treatment of troubled youths, has provided services from the 36th Street location since 1974. It also offers services from Pine Rest Christian Mental Health campus on 68th Street in Cutlerville and from a facility on Byron Center Avenue in Wyoming.

Zylstra said the long-range goals always have been to consolidate the campuses in Kentwood and Cutlerville, where Wedgwood leases space from Pine Rest.

WCS has a 24-bed residential center, a 34-bed residential center, gymnasium, administrative building and chapel. Wedgwood employs more than 350 full- and part-time employees.

The residential buildings are considered medium security, meaning they are locked 24 hours a day and the residents are under continuous supervision. New facilities constructed on the campus also would be considered medium security, with residents having very limited and very little interaction with the surrounding community.

Posted:  
11-16-  
2005  
**Baldwin  
prison  
blues**

## **Community lingers as company sues state for canceling contract**

By JOE BOOMGAARD  
Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

BALDWIN — All but 20 of the corrections officers formerly employed at the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility — 190 of 220 — have been hired into the state Department of Corrections operations, according to DOC spokesman Russ Marlan.

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Lake County residents were given top preference for jobs at the Pugsley Correctional Facility in Kingsley, the closest state-run facility to Baldwin, Marlan said. Other officers went to the Oaks Correctional Facility in Manistee County and to the Muskegon Correctional Facility in Muskegon.

"One of the officers drove in from Grand Rapids to Baldwin every day," Marlan said. "He was practically in tears when he got hired at the Muskegon facility (because it was closer)."

According to the DOC, about 22 percent of the GEO Group facility's employees resided in Lake County.

Other former GEO staff members are being considered for state employment by the DOC and other departments, Marlan said.

Bill Nowling, spokesman for GEO, said that the company offered positions to the Baldwin workers, but did not think that any of the employees took up the offer. The rest of GEO's holdings are out of state.

The youth prison was a 480-bed, privately owned and operated prison filled with Michigan youth offenders in Lake County's Webber Township.

The state, under then Gov. John Engler, contracted with GEO to build the facility and run it as part of a 20-year agreement.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed funding for the prison from the state budget this fall, citing what she referred to as inefficiencies and the desire to save taxpayers money. Opponents have countered, saying the facility was fulfilling its contract, and that it was one of the state's most efficient Level V prisons. Marlan said the state had two contracts with GEO: a management contract worth \$13.4 million and a building lease worth \$5.4 million.

Granholm's decision to cancel the prison contract was twofold, according to Marlan. The facility was constructed under Engler to house an expected wave of violent young super predators, a wave that never materialized, Marlan said. Thus, the maximum security facility housed mostly lower security level



prisoners. The DOC decided the state's money would be better spent by housing those prisoners at one of the state facilities with open bed space. "Our decision was not because of GEO's management of the facility," Marlan said. "Their compliance was fine."

Marlan said MYCF did have a high number of misconducts — a violation of prison rules — issued to inmates. If the prison would have remained open, Marlan said the state was prepared to offer advanced training to GEO's corrections officers to try to avoid some of the problems. But Marlan said there were no problems with mistreatment uncovered by the state's on-site monitor.

Marlan said the management contract had a clause that allowed cancellation for lack of further need for services. The building lease was terminated because "a lawful appropriations was made with a specific prohibition for use against the lease."

The state contract for the facility required the state give GEO a 60-day notice of termination. Currently, the state is fulfilling a lease for the prison building through Dec. 3. The state notified GEO that the prison was no longer needed on Oct. 3, Marlan said.

The lawsuit

GEO filed a lawsuit against the state charging that only the Legislature could cancel the state's lease on the building. The company is contending that the governor's veto canceled the contract. GEO's lawsuit said only the Legislature could have pulled the funding for the building lease.

Both the House and Senate lawmakers found funding for the prison within the DOC budget. The governor line-item vetoed that funding, and the Legislature signed that budget, which Marlan said constitutes the necessary "legislative action."

If the Legislature were to insert one line in the appropriations that stated none of the appropriated funds for the DOC could be given to the GEO Group, Marlan said the fuss over the lease would be moot, but the Legislature has refused to add the line.

"We have no plans to save the governor from herself," Ari Adler, spokesperson for Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming, is reported to have said last month.

A spokeswoman at Sen. Michelle McManus' office said she was waiting to see all of the facts before deciding on the matter.

"We're making payments through Dec. 3," Marlan said. "After that, we're through."

Unless, of course, the state is directed by the courts to continue paying for the prison.

William Nowling, spokesman for GEO, said the company is seeking injunctive relief — in essence a temporary restraining order — to prevent the state from stopping payment.

"It would be a victory for the community," Nowling said, "but it doesn't bring the prisoners back."

Nowling said an injunction would keep the building open for other prisoners,

either from the state or other entities.

"This is only the first stage of the lawsuit," Nowling said. "We invested and put up this \$40 million facility and signed the contract so the state couldn't up and run."

But Granholm's office and Marlan said that trying to keep the prison open is a thing of the past.

"If the result of the lawsuit is that the court says we must continue to pay for a prison we don't use — people might not go for that. We made the decision to cancel the contract for economic reasons. It doesn't seem to fit," said Marlan of continuing to pay for the facility.

Liz Boyd, spokesperson for Gov. Granholm, said the Legislature needs to amend the wording to the appropriations bill to save the state from having to pay the building lease.

"The Republican leadership needs to recognize that their fiduciary responsibility is to the taxpayers of the state. They're elected to do the right thing. The Legislature needs to stop politicizing this and take steps to save taxpayers millions of dollars," Boyd said.

Boyd said the state is continuing to work with the community through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to plan to move forward now that the prison is closed and suggested the legislature do the same rather than costing taxpayers the \$5.4 million per year to lease an empty prison.

A community waits

Lake County CFO Shelly Myers said the community leaders who met with Gov. Granholm are putting the final touches on a letter detailing the major areas in which the county needs help.

"It's kind of like we're on hold ... and there's no music playing," Myers said.

"But we're waiting. We're patient."

Webber Township Supervisor Tony Gagliardo said that the township cannot wait much longer.

"We're faced with a lot of expenses in the near future," Gagliardo said.

Gagliardo said Webber Township will have to take action in the next couple of weeks involving its water system because of the impending cold weather.

"With our water tank, we need to keep it from freezing," Gagliardo said. "It needs to turn over every seven days."

And with only minimal users, there is not enough demand for the water to ensure that rate of turnover, Gagliardo said. The prison was the major user of the water system.

Either the township will be forced to shut the water off and drain the tower or they will have to install a pressure tank and pump and erect a building to house the pump, according to Gagliardo. He said adding the new pump would cost upwards of \$160,000. The pump and tank would cost the township \$80-100,000, with the building adding approximately \$40-60,000. Plus, the township would also have to heat the building.

"That's not what we wanted to use the (township's) money for," Gagliardo said.

'We will survive'

The Corner Market at M-37 and 32nd Street, just down from the prison site, had to let one employee go since the prison closed. Laurie Shields also said he has no plans to hire any part-time help either.

"We put in a good sub shop because there were none around," Shields said. "But you can't sell sandwiches to people who aren't here. We were counting on the prison workers and the locals to get us through the winter. The locals have stood behind us 100 percent."

Both Shields and Deb O'Hart said they picked up side businesses to help make ends meet. "You have to do a little bit of everything to be able to make it," Shields said.

"There are no employees over there, so there's no money anymore. The county's going broke," said Shields. "We sold 20 subs a day to the people from the prison. That's a big cut out of my pocket. That adds up over a year's period."

Dean Snyder, owner of Government Lake Lodge for the last 15 years, said he's still upset with the governor's decision to close the prison.

"I don't think the governor cared about our community," Snyder said. "People who worked for the prison, worked for the community. We created a lot of friends because of the prison – we're all going to feel it."

His bar-restaurant is attached to the sewer line that was put in specifically to accommodate the prison. With the prison – and potentially the tax money from GEO – gone, Snyder wonders if his sewer service will continue.

"I'm concerned how it will affect us – that hasn't been stated," Snyder said.

But, echoing Shields and the other community leaders, Snyder thinks the businesses, the township, and the county will find ways to go on.

"We will survive," said Snyder.

What now?

Nowling said GEO is actively looking for a new set of inmates to fill the Baldwin area facility.

"We're marketing it the best we can," Nowling said. "The problem is the location (in rural Michigan) and that the facility is a Level V maximum security prison. That has limitations."

Nowling said the facility is not cost-efficient when it houses inmates in levels other than maximum security.

GEO is still in negotiation with the state about "how best to use the prison," according to Nowling, although discussions have been slow. "We're a little disappointed. These discussions have not been what they should be,"

Nowling said.

GEO thinks there are several options for the building, including:

- The state could renew a contract with GEO to house Level V adult inmates.
- GEO could maintain the building and lease it to the state, who could house and staff the prison.
- GEO could get prisoners from outside of Michigan to fill the prison.
- The state could buy the prison from GEO.

"We'd like to keep it within the Michigan system," Nowling said.

Nowling said by DOC's own estimation, the state will run out of bed space in

the next year and a half, so keeping the Baldwin area facility available — under whichever option — makes sense for the state.

“We want people to have jobs,” Nowling said, “but we don’t need to take economic resources out of Lake County, one of the poorest counties in the state.”

Jeff McKnight, the president of the Lake County Chamber of Commerce, said traffic in the Baldwin area has not been as busy as in previous years.

“Things are a little quiet here — it’s admittedly slow,” said McKnight. “This (deer season) is our holiday season, so it’s more difficult to do some things (with the state) in a timely manner.”

McKnight said he’s heard from other local businesses who’ve been seeing a slowing trend in their business since the prison closed, but said most businesses won’t be able to notice a decrease for a few months.

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Kalamazoo Gazette

Letters

November 15, 2005

## **Some good news on Juvenile Home**

Finally, there is good news from Kalamazoo County government.

The county's proposal to fund reconstruction of the Juvenile Home, using its own funds rather than asking again for new millage, is a big step in the right direction. While funding the project now with an internal bond issue would be preferable to building up a fund for construction in 2010, at least the problem is on its way to a solution.

Also, the proposal to phase out the 50-percent subsidy to townships which contract with the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department for police service is long overdue. Having residents of cities and non-participating townships subsidize services in four rather prosperous townships, while paying for their own local police and for the sheriff's department, was never close to fair.

Jerome Kohel  
Kalamazoo

# 'She had marks like hands' on neck

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

By Danielle Quisenberry  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- For a moment, Leoncio Garcia-Lopez said he believed Edwin Lario Munoz when he told Garcia-Lopez his pregnant wife, lying still on the kitchen floor, was not dead. But Garcia-Lopez, 43, testified he quickly acknowledged the truth: Silvia Sanchez-Parada was dead.

"I looked at her, and she had marks like hands (on her neck), and I saw she was no longer living," he said through an interpreter at Tuesday's preliminary hearing for Munoz, charged with murder for the Oct. 14 deaths of Sanchez-Parada, 28, and her unborn daughter, later named Luz Maria by her father.

Munoz, 19, also is charged with attempting to murder Garcia-Lopez in a fight that began after Garcia-Lopez discovered his wife's body inside the rental home where they all lived at 848 Baxter St. SE.

Grand Rapids District Judge Benjamin Logan adjourned the hearing, and Munoz will remain jailed without bond until it resumes. No date was set.

If after that hearing Logan decides there is enough evidence to send the case forward to Circuit Court, Munoz will be tried.

If convicted, the Honduran native and one-time immigrant poster child, who testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee about the plight of young aliens, faces up to life in prison.

On the day of the slaying, Garcia-Lopez said he punched out at 3:10 p.m. on the computerized clock at Chili's restaurant on 28th Street SE, where he cooked and washed dishes. He arrived home from work at 4:10 p.m. to find the door bolted and Munoz inside armed with a meat fork and a cooking knife.

Dr. David Start, a Kent County medical examiner, said Sanchez-Parada was strangled to death around 3 p.m. at the latest. She could have been strangled with the defendant's hands and a metal bar police found at the scene, Start said.

He conducted the autopsy on the mother and her unborn child.

The 26-week fetus could have been saved, had medical personnel been called to the scene immediately, he said.

The police were not called by a neighbor until after Garcia-Lopez discovered his wife's body, then fought off the alleged attack by Munoz.

When Garcia-Lopez arrived home, he said the teenager let him in the front door and was speaking of gangs being in the house.

He also said gang members had put some type of liquid on Sanchez-Parada's body that made her look dead, Garcia-Lopez testified.

Police later testified no one else was found to be in the home.

Garcia-Lopez said he was nervous because Munoz had a knife and was worried about his 10-month old son, Jonathan Garcia-Sanchez, who he could hear crying from a first-floor bedroom.

As he testified, Garcia-Lopez gestured continually with his still-bandaged hands.

He suffered cuts when he grabbed for a knife he said Munoz had shoved through the French doors of the bedroom, where Garcia-Lopez was tending to his son.

"He had no compassion for my son," Garcia-Lopez said.

## Man arraigned on dueling, domestic violence charges

A 32-year-old Mt. Clemens man was arraigned on dueling and aggravated domestic violence charges Monday for his involvement in a knife fight on a Mt. Clemens street in September.

James Moore was arrested Saturday after a deputy from the **Macomb County Sheriff's** Office got a tip about his whereabouts, said Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel. The deputy spotted Moore on a bicycle near Howard Street in Mt. Clemens and tried to stop him, but the suspect was able to get away. Hackel said deputies caught up with Moore a few moments later and arrested him at his sister-in-law's home on Orchard.

Moore is accused of stabbing his nephew in the abdomen after a fight over \$30 outside a home on North Walnut Street on Sept. 26. Dueling is a 10-year felony, and aggravated domestic violence is a 1-year misdemeanor. Moore is being held in the Macomb County Jail on a \$15,000 bond. His next court date is Nov. 28.  
*By Stan Donaldson*

DFP 11/15

# **Man sought in girlfriend's slaying nabbed in Detroit**

## **Suspect was released from jail Oct. 31 after serving time for stalking**

PUBLISHED: November 16, 2005

By Norb Franz  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

*Acting on a tip, police arrested Joseph Henry Duncil on Tuesday in connection with last week's fatal shooting of his girlfriend.*

Police said they caught up with Duncil at about 6:15 p.m. in the area of Six Mile and Van Dyke in Detroit. He had been on the run since Saturday.

"We were working on the tip all day," Warren Detective Lt. Dan DeMeester said. "We watched him walking down a side street and up to a party store."

Duncil was alone and arrested without incident. He was not armed at the time. Detectives were interviewing him Tuesday night and also conducting other interviews.

Police said they have not yet recovered the gun used in the shooting. Duncil, 21, is expected to be arraigned today on charges of open murder and felony firearm possession.

Duncil is accused of shooting Niki Hirth, 17, in front of their 3-month-old son Saturday in her Warren home. Friends, relatives and neighbors of Hirth in the Motor City Trailer Park said the couple argued often.

After hearing the gunshot, three people who were in the mobile home where Hirth resided said Duncil came out of the bedroom carrying the handgun and said, "I f----- up. Call an ambulance," police said. Duncil then allegedly ran from the home.

For a week prior to the shooting, Duncil was seen carrying a .38-caliber revolver and had repeatedly threatened the young mother, police said. Officials said earlier Tuesday that Duncil has a history of altercations with women. Police and prosecutors say that in the past three years two women obtained personal protection orders in court requiring Duncil to keep his distance.

In July 2002, a Warren resident who had dated Duncil reported that she frequently called police for domestic violence, threats and arguments. She said she suffered broken ribs, a fracture to an arm and a dislocated



shoulder, according to Macomb County Circuit Court records reviewed by The Macomb Daily.

"He also has broken things and threw things at and in my house ... also (threatening) to kill me or to bash in my head," the 32-year-old woman, whose name is not being published by the newspaper, wrote in her request for the personal protection order.

She said Duncil's behavior, and continuous telephone calls at night, scared her four children. A judge issued the PPO without a court hearing. In February 2003, another PPO naming Duncil was granted after a 39-year-old Warren woman feared Duncil "will do something" to her house or vehicle because she was opposed to letting him speak with her daughter.

"Because we forbid him at our home or to see my daughter, he calls and threatens us, that he is going to blow up our house" or to have someone "jump" her or her husband, the mother said in court records.

Well known to Warren police for frequent brushes with the law, Duncil had been out of jail less than two weeks when the slaying occurred. He was freed from the Macomb County Jail on Oct. 31, after serving 90-day sentence for stalking, minus a few days credit for good behavior, a jail spokesman said.

According to 37th District Court records, Duncil was charged with third-degree retail fraud for a May 2005 theft. While behind bars, he wrote a letter to Judge John Chmura on Aug. 29, three days before a court hearing, in which he insisted probation wasn't part of an earlier sentence that formed the basis for a subsequent probation violation charge.

On Tuesday, Warren detectives said they were kept busy checking several tips about Duncil's whereabouts. Capt. Jere Green said the calls were coming "non-stop."

Surveillance leading to the arrest was conducted by Warren detectives, undercover Warren officers and the County of Macomb Enforcement Team's Fugitive squad.

# Fowler prelim set for Dec. 5

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

By Salina Ali

**sali@citpat.com -- 768-4927**

LaTonya Fowler, charged in the death of her 95-year-old great-grandmother will face Jackson County District Judge Joseph S. Filip for a preliminary exam Dec. 5 on one count of first-degree homicide and one count of premeditated first-degree homicide.

Fowler, 34, is accused of killing Izora Smith during an argument at Smith's home in the 2900 block of Heritage Park Nov. 8.

Blackman Township Public Safety officers were called to investigate after a friend of Smith's arrived at her home and found her lying in a pool of blood.

A neighbor told police Fowler was seen leaving the residence about 12:30 p.m. the same day, Public Safety Director Thomas Finco said.

The county medical examiner determined Smith died of blunt trauma to the head, Finco said.

Investigators found a broken water glass at the scene that police believe was used to hit Smith.

The Dec. 5 hearing is to determine if there is enough evidence to try Fowler in circuit court.

Fowler admitted during a police interview that she struck Smith during the argument, Finco said.

Two vehicles that are linked to Fowler, a 2000 Ford Taurus and a 1999 Chrysler LHS, were confiscated and sent to a crime lab in Lansing for testing. Police found a bag containing bloody clothes in one car and files belonging to Smith in the other, Finco said.

Fowler has previous convictions in Ingham and Jackson counties, according to the state Department of Corrections and Jackson County Sheriff's Department.

Published November 16, 2005

## **Kids collect 31,730 pounds of food for needy Groceries to create Thanksgiving for up to 32,000 people**

By Hugh Leach  
Lansing State Journal

Thousands of needy mid-Michigan residents will enjoy Thanksgiving dinners, thanks to the efforts of area school students.

Twenty-two schools and two pre-schools contributed nearly 16 tons of nonperishable foods to the American Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center.

Some schools also held food drives for other charities.

Okemos High School's National Honor Society collected nearly half of the Red Cross total.

"This is one of the best things we do," said Hilary Richardson, a senior and president of the Okemos National Honor Society chapter. "We are able to pull a lot of different resources together. It's a good feeling to do something like this, and I'm glad it was as successful as it was."

Unlike most schools, the Okemos High students go out into the community and leave grocery bags at homes for people to fill. Last Saturday, they picked up the bags people left on their porches or at other designated spots.

Weymouth Elementary School in Charlotte collected more than a ton of food with a drive that took place in early October.

This is the fifth year Weymouth has held a food drive, teacher Julie Pearson said. As many schools did this year, the drive was held in connection with the national Make a Difference Day on Oct. 22.

Weymouth started off with a weeklong beverage can drive with deposit money being used to buy food. Then followed a weeklong food drive and a week of contributing money to vote for a favorite teacher; proceeds were used to buy food.

"Once kids take off with an idea for a food drive, the sky's the limit," said Kathe Smith, operations supervisor for the Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center.

The center distributes food to 200 agencies in Clinton, Eaton, Ingham, Gratiot, Shiawassee, Clare and Isabella counties. Smith said most of the school donations will be used for Thanksgiving dinners.

She said she did not know how many people the school efforts will feed, but a rule of thumb is that a pound of food is about a meal for a person. At that rate, the schools will have provided dinners for nearly 32,000 people.

More schools are becoming involved in food drives annually, Smith said.

"The students should be proud of whatever they collect," she said. "It all helps feed hungry people. It's all important to us."

St. Therese School in Lansing is conducting a drive to stock the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry.

This year's theme is "Sac(k)rifice for Others." Food donations are placed in grocery sacks that will line the school's hallways.

"It's sort of a classroom versus classroom competition and the kids really get into it," teacher Tom Kavanagh said.

Contact Hugh Leach at 377-1119 or [hleach@lsj.com](mailto:hleach@lsj.com).

#### Food collections

The amount of food collected, in pounds, for the American Red Cross by participating area schools this year. Most of the food will be used to provide Thanksgiving meals for the needy.

- Beagle Middle School, Grand Ledge: 638
- Charlotte High School: 1,585
- Chippewa Middle School, Okemos: 180
- Cornell Elementary School: Okemos, 211
- DeWitt High School: 1,967
- Dwight Rich Middle School, Lansing: 1,494
- Educational Childcare Center, Lansing: 117
- Fairview Elementary School, Lansing: 114

- Fuerstenau Early Childhood Center, DeWitt: 656
- Gardner Middle School, Lansing: 774
- Holt Junior High School: 93
- Holt 9th-Grade Campus: 182
- Weymouth Elementary School, Charlotte: 2,142
- Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Lansing: 147
- Kinawa Middle School, Okemos: 694
- Okemos High School: 15,377
- MacDonald Middle School, East Lansing: 1,089
- Marble Elementary School, East Lansing: 982
- Midway Elementary School, Holt: 400
- Pattengill Middle School, Lansing: 347
- Tutor Time, Okemos: 215
- St. Casimir School, Lansing: 147
- Washington Elementary School, Charlotte: 163
- Whitehills Elementary School, East Lansing: 2,016
- Total: 31,730 pounds

Source: Kathe Smith, American Red Cross

# Effort helps spotlight needs of homeless throughout the state

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

By Christofer Machniak  
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FLINT - Michael Roat has called his 1989 Ford Aerostar home for the past five weeks.

The 19-year-old recently lost his lawn care job after the minivan's brakes went out. He shares the vehicle, parked on an east-side street, with two other homeless men after he was kicked out of his mother's house and evicted from another home.

"I can't afford gas or food, so we came here," Roat said Tuesday outside the East Side Mission, 1829 Delaware Ave.

The site was one of four locations across Flint where hundreds were served a free meal while they answered surveys about their needs.

The event was a collaboration of local poverty-assistance agencies and held during Homeless Awareness Week, a statewide campaign to educate the public about homelessness that runs through Friday.

In Genesee County, a one-day survey of local agencies in 2004 showed about 2,200 people were homeless or in emergency or transitional shelters. Advocates believe the number is growing.

They say homelessness affects children and families more than most people realize, citing studies that show that 35 percent to 40 percent of the homeless are families and children.

"We, as the agencies, are trying to do what we can to fix that problem," said Katie MacDonald, program coordinator for Metro Housing Partnership Inc.

The survey program, which was expanded Tuesday to reach Flint neighborhoods for the first time, gathers information from the needy themselves, organizers said. In the past, the input led providers to produce booklets of area services in English and Spanish.

Roat said he hopes the surveys help, and the public does more for those in his situation. He said things are getting better since one of his van-mates earned enough money to afford a hotel room, but it's tough finding a job.

"There's no work here for anybody unless you got experience," he said.

## QUICK TAKE

Homeless

Awareness Week

THEME: "We end it here. We end it now."

WHEN: Through Friday.

INFORMATION: Material about area agencies that serve the homeless is available this week in the Flint City Hall lobby, 1101 S. Saginaw St.

EVENTS: Students at some area schools are competing in a high school challenge to see who can sell the most \$2 white bracelets that say "Gotta Home." The school that sells the most will win a monetary prize. Other high schools can join the competition by contacting Katie MacDonald at (810) 767-4622, ext. 25. The bracelets also are available at Regis Hair Salon at the Genesee Valley shopping center in Flint Township.

# Salvation Army to launch red kettle fund drive

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

BURTON

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION  
Wednesday, November 16, 2005

By George Jaksa  
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The Salvation Army of Genesee County will kick off its annual red kettle fund drive at noon Friday at Courtland Center to raise money for Christmas gifts for the area's needy. Personalities from Channel 12 (WJRT) in Flint, WCRZ-FM (107.9) in Burton and The Flint Journal are honorary co-chairs of this year's six-week campaign that will end just before Christmas. Last year, the kettle drive raised \$327,097 at more than 40 Genesee County sites, which was supplemented by \$310,927 in mailed-in donations.

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**IN A MINUTE**

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**FUND-RAISER****Cookie sale to benefit foster children's program**

"C" is for "cookie" — and for "charity."

A cookie sale to raise money for Big Family of Michigan, a nonprofit that works to improve the lives of hard-to-place adoptable foster children, is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 3, when the proceeds of \$10 bags of cookies sold at the Parisian department store in Laurel Park Place at 6 Mile and Newburgh will be donated to the charity.

The 10 bakeries participating in the event are: Busch's, Kroger, Heritage Bakery, Max & Erma's and Panera Bread in **Livonia**; Le Cakery Bake Shop and Mary Denning's Cake Shoppe in **Westland**; Farmer Jack in **Northville**; the Pastry Palace in **Novi**, and Farmington Bakery in **Farmington**.

*By Zlati Meyer*



# Volunteers take the time to ready local rescue mission room

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

By Scott E. Pacheco  
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

Bethany Pierce likes to paint, even if the pharmacy school hopeful doesn't want to make it her life's work.

On Monday, the junior at Essexville-Hampton's Garber High School put her recreational talents to use for the benefit of others.

Pierce, with other members of the Bay Area Community Foundation's Youth Advisory Committee, helped paint walls, vents and ceiling tracks in a room at the Good Samaritan Rescue Mission to help ready the quarters for a needy family.

She said the committee, which also doled out a \$2,550 grant for the work, jumped at the chance to get its hands dirty.

"We could actually go and help someone and see the results," said Pierce, 16. "It's a lot of fun." Six members of the youth committee divided into two groups on Monday; one painted while the other shopped for room decor. About another eight members worked Tuesday.

The students "adopted" one of four rooms in the family wing at the mission, 713 Ninth St.

The women's wing, which opened in March, has 32 beds for women and their children. The family wing, however, has only raised \$4,000 of the \$18,000 needed to complete the rooms and make a shower/restroom area, said Dan Streeter, director of the mission.

The timing of the help is ideal with the onset of winter, he said.

"As the temperature drops, the numbers go up," Streeter said.

He said the organization hopes to obtain the remaining \$14,000 soon, speeding up the remodeling project. Once completed, the family wing will add another 16 beds for the mission.

"It really is a reasonable, bite-size chunk," Streeter said of the remaining money needed. "If we were to have a series of individuals that were to get serious about it, it really wouldn't take too much. We could easily see the doors open this winter."

The foundation's Youth Advisory Committee, which is made up of mostly local students grades 7-12, helped by doing physical work, said Ronald Greenwood, facilities manager at the mission.

"It saved me a ton of work," said Greenwood, who has been at the mission for three years. "We are in the messy part of the operation. The floodgates are beginning to open."

Kelsey Allen said painting the ceiling grid an off-white tone was "tedious," but said the cause was worth it.

"It makes you feel good because you are helping other people," said Allen, 14, and a freshman at Bangor Township's John Glenn High School.

The Youth Advisory Committee was founded in 1988 with the initial funding coming from a \$1 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. There are more than 20 members on the committee, said Michael Kasperski, a member of the community foundation's board of trustees.

The Youth Advisory Committee functions in much the same way as the Bay Area Community Foundation, with marketing, grant-making, membership, volunteer and special projects committees.

It has given grants totaling \$372,660 to local organizations and schools in the past five years, according to the group's brochure.

- Scott E. Pacheco covers education and business for The Times. He can be reached at 894-9646 or by e-mail at [spacheco@bc-times.com](mailto:spacheco@bc-times.com).

# Fight against poverty must take broad-based approach

Grand Rapids Press

Wednesday, November 16, 2005

By Jordan Yin

It is important that Kalamazoo County continue to fund the work of the Kalamazoo Poverty Reduction Initiative in developing and carrying out a broad-based strategy to eliminate poverty throughout our area.

I recently worked with a group of researchers from Western Michigan University that examined the extent of poverty in Kalamazoo County, based on data from the 2000 Census. Our report identified the need for poverty reduction activities to engage a wide variety of approaches addressing the area's urban, suburban and rural communities.

Importantly, the demographic makeup and geographic distribution of the county's low-income population strongly suggests that many strategies in addition to job creation will be necessary to effectively address the problem of poverty, although the ongoing work of our region's economic development organizations is an important component of any anti-poverty campaign.

According to the 2000 Census, roughly 27,500 persons in the county lived at or below the poverty level. This represents an overall poverty rate of 12 percent of the total population.

Poverty is a problem shared by all of the communities throughout Kalamazoo County, as nearly 40 percent of all the persons in poverty in Kalamazoo County live in one of the rural townships or suburban areas outside the city of Kalamazoo. Moreover, poverty in Kalamazoo County impacts not just many places, but also many different people and for many reasons.

In particular, three specific groups within our community are most affected by poverty: families headed by unmarried women and their children, older persons, and persons with disabilities.

First, nearly one in three persons in poverty in Kalamazoo County belongs to a family headed by a single mother. Half of these families live somewhere in Kalamazoo County other than the city of Kalamazoo.

Second, persons over 55 represent roughly 10 percent of persons in poverty throughout the county. Half of these older persons living in poverty live outside of the city of Kalamazoo.

Lastly, persons with one or more mental or physical disabilities make up nearly a quarter of the persons in poverty in Kalamazoo County. Roughly 40 percent of people with disabilities in poverty live outside of the city of Kalamazoo.

Tackling poverty in Kalamazoo County requires substantial resources and targeted solutions that recognize the diversity of low-income persons. Clearly, a poverty reduction strategy that helps a suburban family may not work for a family living in a rural community given differences in employment opportunities, educational opportunities and transportation options. Likewise, a strategy that lifts a single mother and her family out of poverty by addressing root causes such as a lack of affordable day care, probably will not be appropriate to address the needs of older persons or persons with disabilities.

Further efforts to develop and implement a broad-based poverty reduction strategy should be funded not just by Kalamazoo County, but also by all of the local governments throughout the county. It is important that we continue to work on targeted approaches for community-based anti-poverty programs in urban, suburban and rural communities, as well as programs that address the specific needs of all of the different members of our community.

Jordan Yin is a geography  
instructor at Western Michigan University.